BOOKS

REVIEWS OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS WITH NEWS AND VIEWS OF AUTHORS

Soundings in the Sea of Ink

May Sinclair and Rose Macaulay New Plutarch and Bible Versions

Babies and savages feel their life and don't think about it—simple consciousness. But soon they find that there is something outside of themselves. Still they escape the nuisance of thought. This external world simply modifies their feeling—makes them comfortable or cross, extends the range of their simple consciousness.

This isn't the first chapter of a new book on psychology. But if one is going to talk about books he will have a hard time ploughing round all the psychological stumps. So here goes. We have man waking up to the fact of himself as an individual.

It is a long way from the starting point to the stage in which the mind becomes conscious of its own consciousness; when the critical intelligence stands off and watches the antics of the emotional life to which it is chained and even sees its own reasoning processes in the glass.

That is what a good many novelists are putting in the form of fiction. If they are born story tellers, so much the better. But this theme of consciousness is the very air their people breathe. The two latest examples are "Dangerous Ages" (Boni and Liveright) by Rose Macaulay and "Mr. Waddington of Wyck" (Macmillan) by May Sinclair.

Both books are good reading, clear, free from crotchets and irritating interruptions. And each has a story to tell. Things happen. But compared with "Three Musketeers," where external action is the theme, the reader's interest is centred on the self-consciousness of the characters.

In Miss Sinclair's book there is a curious likeness to "Twelfth Night." Mr. Waddington is a kind of Malvolio, even to the parallel between that poor dupe's cross-gartering and the other's absurd pajamas. In the modern story Barbara Madden and Ralph Bevan are amused spectators like Maria, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in Shakespeare.

But observe this difference, which marks a change in the public itself. The Elizabethan comedy is offered as a pleasant pastime of the stage, external to the audience. May Sinclair drags the reader into her world. Or, rather, she insinuates continually the implication that in Barbara and Ralph she is only reporting the general modern custom of character study.

In other words, Shakespeare may have been something of a psychoanalyst for playgoers, but now the footlights are down and we're all in the play. Psychology is the great modern indoor sport.

Mr. Waddington is an egoist, but a much simpler type than the central figure of George Meredith's novel. For it is Barbara's and Ralph's pursuit of him as a specimen, their intense consciousness of themselves in the process of observing him that forms the novel's true theme. Considered by himself Waddington is a rather old-fashioned creation. And very likely May Sinclair intended him to be that. If he had been too engrossing he would have distracted the reader's attention from Barbara and Ralph, and from his own wife, who is a kind of bridge between Waddington and the other two.

If the nominal subject of the story rouses any emotion in the reader, it is a kind of pity because of the relentless hounding of him by the novelist. Very likely the author intended that result also.

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"Potterism' gave Rose Macaulay a place, but its rather special kind of appeal left her in some danger of being counted a one-book author. "Dangerous Ages" is complete proof that she isn't that. Good as "Potterism" was, this is bettter. It strikes the note of pure beauty on as musical a first page as any novelist has written for a long time, with its "multitudinous silver calling of a world full of birds. They chattered and bickered about the creepered house, shrill and sweet, like a hundred brooks running together down steep rocky places after snow."

Rose Macaulay can paint landscapes and seascapes—for the surf beats through many pages. But earth and ocean are only the setting for her living human figures. And her people are absolutely alive—obstinately, cryingly alive—no matter what their age.

Like "Milestones" this deals with generations. But instead of coming one after another as in the successive acts of the play these are shown together. So the contrasts of mode are emphasized, but underneath all changes is the fundamental desire to live and to savor life, to capture its essence.

Neville, the fresh young mother of grave, all-knowing children, felt it on her birthday—felt it historically and prophetically—for all the others, as in the overture of an opera. "They have lived, they have eaten, drunk, loved, bathed, suffered, talked, danced in the night and rejoiced in the dawn, warmed, in fact, both hands before the fire of life, but still they are not ready to depart. For they are behindhand with time, obsessed with so many worlds, so much to do, the petty done, the undone vast. It depressed Milton when he turned twenty-three; it depresses all those with vain and ambitious temperaments at least once a year."

Neville's mother renewed her youth through psychoanalysis which "opened the door into a new and richer life. St. Mary's bay was illumined in her thoughts, instead of being drab and empty as before. Sublimated complexes twinkled over it like stars. Freed *libido* poured electrically about it." This proved, however, a brief respite, for she was not equipped to win happiness that way. In fact, she wasn't equipped for happiness at all.

Her daughter Nan got some satisfaction out of the union of a perfect body and a spirit without fear. "As a child she had ridden unbroken horses and teased and dodged savage bulls for the fun of it; she would go sailing in seas that fishermen refused to go out in; part angry dogs which no onlooker would touch; sleep out alone in dark and lonely woods, and even on occasion brave pigs. The kind of gay courage she had was a physical heritage which can never be acquired. What can be acquired, with blood and tears, is the courage of the will, stubborn and unyielding, but always nerve-racked, proud and tensely strung up."

All these people are trying life, questioning what it means, seeking a definition for happiness. The author's answer has in it something modern but more perhaps of ancient philosophy—expressed in Pamela, "debonair and detached, ironic, cool and quiet, responsive to life and yet—thought disdainful of it, lightly holding and easily renouncing; the world's lover, yet not its servant, her foot at times carelessly on its neck to prove her power over it."

Is not this more or less the attitude of Plutarch's men?

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Translators of the Bible do not always understand how much of the power of the Book is conveyed through the music, the emotional values of words and phrases. They reason plausibly that modern scholars have found errors in the rendering of certain words. And doubtless the modern scholars are right. But perfection of scholarship never touched a heart.

The editors of "The Shorter Bible: The Old Testament" (Scribner's) have made a new translation. But their chief service is that of abridgment and arrangement. There is a good deal of repetition in the Bible and they have tried by omitting duplicates, by grouping narratives according to obvious progression, to secure a clearer picture. Their titles and subtitles are excellent. Certainly the reader will find a good many things that confused him in Sunday school lessons made plain in the reading of this text.

Even in the poetic sense, however, the new version is not always inferior. There is the love lyric at the end of the "Song of Songs" or "Solomon's Song" as it is variously named. The older version runs:

"Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

"My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

How infinitely clearer, flashing with divine fire is this:

"My vineyard—my home! is before me.

"O Solomon, I leave you your thousand,

"And the fruit of the vines to their keepers."

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It was said at one time that the public wanted no more books about the war. The public wants no more empty volumes for which the interest in the war furnished an excuse. But, whenever a Philip Gibbs or a General Dawes or somebody yet unknown has anything worth saying it will be read, war or no war.

Plutarch put the whole matter in a statement of his purpose in writing of men who happened to be engaged at times in fighting:

"Sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. . . . So I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the works and indications of the souls of men and, while I endeavor by these to portray their lives, may be free to leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated of by others."

Miss Hahn reviews the new translation of Plutarch as though the original had just been published. And the fact is his life of Marc Anthony is much fresher than many a last year's biography.

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What a pity that Plutarch didn't live to do Roosevelt! He would have had as corking a time over that biography as T. R. had being President. But already there is a good beginning for a Roosevelt library. He will probably come next after Lincoln in the number of books and articles written about him.

In both cases the men's own writings come first. Roosevelt's autobiography, his letters, edited by Bishop, and his letters to his children are all invaluable. And to this first hand material Mrs. Robinson brings essential pages. The first part of her volume, relating to T. R.s own childhood shows how his happy relation to his children was a continuance of the life in his own father's home.

A Novel From Howell's Youth

MRS. FARRELL. By William Dean Howells. Harper & Bros.

THE posthumous publication of work which the author, presumably with deliberation, has not seen fit to include in collective editions during his lifetime, is perhaps a dubious proceeding. But in the case of a Howells it is probably inevitable; one would not willingly let anything of his remain out of reach. This story appeared serially in the *Atlantic* in 1875, during Howells's editorship, under the title of "Private Theatricals," but has not hitherto been given permanent book form.

One can see why the fully mature, critical Howells was not overanxious to revive it. It has a certain crudity now and then, a hardness unlike his riper work. Yet it is genuine Howells, and perhaps entitled to more respect than he himself seems to have given it. It is youthful and has the youthful qualities of vigor and enthusiasm, and, along with them, the occasional defects of those qualities. The original title exactly fitted it; the whole conception is somewhat theatrical, with almost the smell of the footlights about some of its scenes. The heroine, Mrs. Farrell, is really indulging in a kind of private theatricals all through the book, posing consciously and sometimes semi-consciously. She ends her career, so far as the story takes it, by actually going on the stage.

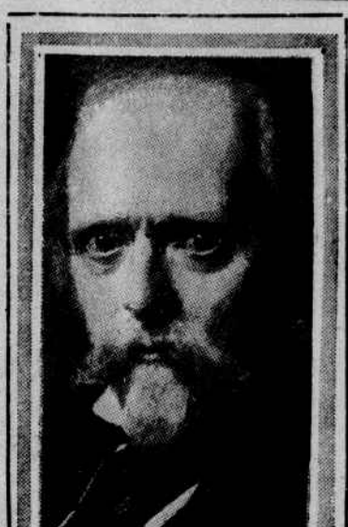
She is a sprightly young widow, rather effervescent for the period of the story (the late 60s, shortly after the civil war) and also for the environment, as the tale is staged in a country farm boarding house in New England. She is, in a way, a forerunner of our modern Greenwich Village type, a lady of rather "unfettered speech"—that is, for those days, although her indiscreet remarks would sound very tamely to-day. She is intelligent and far from heartless, but inclined to experimentation without due realization of possible consequences. "Why," says one of her critics, diagnosing her, "can't you imagine a woman's liking to triumph over people with her beauty and yet meaning it to be a purely æsthetic triumph?" But, unfortunately for the victims, they did not look at it in that light.

She flirts with two young men and succeeds in disrupting their friendship. "At best," says Mr. Howells, "love is fatal to friendship; the most that friendship can do is to listen to love's talk of itself and be the confidant of its rapturous joys, its transports of despair. The lover fancies himself all the fonder of his friend because of his passion for his mistress, but in reality he has no longer any need of the old comrade." So much the worse when there is rivalry in love as well. In this story it brings about renunciations, misunderstandings and no end of trouble—which the reader should be allowed to unravel for himself—and ends in neither getting the lady, who retires, in single satisfaction, to the actual footlights.

The minor characters, especially the New England country folk, are rather more interesting, and assuredly better done, than the leading lady and her squires. Howells was always, during his long New England residence, rather in than of New England, always looking at the people he met from the outside, but seeing them with unusual clarity of vision. Perhaps, as Mildred Howells suggests in the introduction to this volume, he was a better painter of their portraits because of his Ohio origin. The young girl, Rachel, who is "gifted" as an artist, but still thoroughly belonging to her environment, is a subtly accurate bit of the New England of that day. She is moved to give back most of the purchase price paid for her picture because she thinks the price was too high. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," she remarks, "but he isn't if he takes any more." What havoc such a doctrine would work among the ranks of the laborers of to-day, whether artist, lawyer, preacher or bricklayer! Yet there was just that quality in the vanished New England—a striking manifestation of the deeply ingrained "Anglo-Saxon" feeling for fair play.

The stage setting, scenery, &c., are managed throughout with great skill. Herein it was a fully mature Howells who was writing. One cannot say quite as much of the minute analyses of the various characters' states of mind, the emotions of the lover and of Mrs. Farrell herself. It is far from being 'prentice work, but it is not Howells at his best. Nevertheless, it is well worth while.

H. L. PANGBORN.



If the author of "Man and Superman" were asked to explain the title of Sir Hall Caine's new noved, "The Master of Man," he might answer, "Woman." And then again he might not. There are women on the Isle of Man, however, for Sir Hall in his introduction tells us about his grandmother.

She must have been a brave creature, for she called the light of literature that was to be "Hommy-beg." Look at the majestic head at the top of this column and think on her irreverence!

Potterism is one of to-day's names for what the Victorians used to call Philistinism. Rose

Macaulay, whose portrait is the centre of this page, invented the name—not the thing itself. Her latest novel, "Dangerous Ages," is only the plural of an older title. But there's a difference between singular and plural—in wives, for instance.

Cheer up, young author. The book you're sadly taking back from publisher after publisher may be issued after copyrights have ceased to interest you. There is young Howells, who was known to this generation as an elderly gentleman, about whom nobody argued any more. He had become a classic and he sat in *Harper's* "Easy Chair." But two of his books, "The Kelwyns" and the new "Mrs. Farrell," had to wait till after he left us for publication.

Sister's Memories of Roosevelt

Mrs. Robinson Shows Boy and Man As His Family Knew Him at Home

MY BROTHER THEODORE ROOSEVELT. By Corinne Roosevelt Robinson. Charles Scribner's Sons.

PEOPLE who were irritated by the noise Roosevelt made in the world, the space he filled in the news and in conversation, should begin to realize by this time that he had a right to more than one-man space. For the biographies that have come out since his passing reveal a regiment of Roosevelts. His sister's account of him could have been written by nobody else. The angle of affection picks out highlights that other portraits do not show. And there are definite additions to facts worth knowing about the man.

Emphasis is naturally placed on family life, both in the home into which he was born and in the home which he helped to create. Here is a story from the White House period:

"He came out of his dressing room radiant and smiling, ready for the day's work, looking as if he had had eight hours of sleep instead of five, and rippling all over with the laughter which he always infused into those family breakfasts. As we passed the table at the head of the staircase, at which later in the day my sister's secretary wrote her letters, the telephone bell on the table rang, and with spontaneous simplicity—not even thinking of ringing a bell for a 'menial' to answer the telephone call—he picked up the receiver himself as he passed by. His face assumed a listening look, and then a broad smile broke over his features. 'No,' he said. 'No, I am not Archie. I am Archie's father.' A second passed and he laughed aloud, and then said: 'All right, I will tell him; I won't forget.' Hanging up the receiver he turned to me half sheepishly but very much amused. 'That's a good joke on any President,' he said. 'You may have realized that there was a little boy on the other end of that wire, and he started the conversation by saying, 'Is that you, Archie?' and I replied, 'No, it is Archie's father.' Whereupon he answered with evident disgust: 'Well, you'll do Be sure and tell Archie to come to supper. Now, don't forget.'"

This was the spirit in which his own father and mother treated him. Away back in civil war days the elder Mrs. Roosevelt was writing to her husband in Washington letters in which the future Rough Rider was already a figure. For example, under date of January 8, 1862:

"Teedie came downstairs this morning looking rather sad and said, 'I feel badly—I have a toothache in my stomach.' Later he asked if 'Dod' (God) was a fox!—this after being shown a picture of a very clever looking fox. He is the most affectionate and endearing little creature in his ways."

Certainly Roosevelt found, later, a good deal of divinity in the world of wild animals, though his writings do not show any theological bent in his adult mind.

He entered the profession of authorship at an early age. And again his interest in animals was evident. At fourteen, during a European sojourn, he wrote "Mrs. Field Mouse's Dinner Party" for "The Dresden Literary American Club," which met weekly to hear readings of original compositions by its members. Here is a characteristic passage from the story, reporting the zoological dinner table talk at the said party:

"Mr. Moth (a very scientific gentleman) made a diversion by saying, 'Have you seen my work on "Various Antennæ?" In it I demonstrated clearly the superiority of feathered to knobbed antennæ, and——'

"'Excuse me, sir,' interrupted Sir Butterfly, 'but you surely don't mean to say——'

"'Excuse *me*, if you please,' replied Mr. Moth sharply, 'but I *do* mean it, and if you read my work you will perceive that the rays of featherlike particles on the trunk of the antennæ driving from the centre in straight or curved lines generally——' At this moment Mr. Moth luckily choked himself and seizing the lucky instant Mrs. M. rang for the dessert."

There is no lack of matter about the subject's public life. Here is an incident of his experience as a New York city official:

"My brother described to me the delicious humor of the parade inaugurated by the German brewer societies as a protest against his enforcement of the law when he was Police Commissioner. They were parading to show their disapproval of him, but at the last moment, as a wonderful piece of sarcasm, they decided to invite him to review the parade, hardly thinking that he would accept the invitation. Needless to say he *did* accept it, and leaning over from the platform where he had been invited to sit he saw the mass of marching men carrying banners with 'Down with Teddy!' and various other more unpleasant expletives. One company, as it passed the reviewing stand called out: *'Wo ist Teddy?' 'Hier bin ich,'* called out the Police Commissioner leaning over the railing and flashing his white teeth good-humoredly at the protesting crowd, who, unable to resist the sunshine of his personality, suddenly turned, and, putting aside the disapproving banners, cheered him to the echo."

Theodore Roosevelt was never a snob, socially or intellectually. He valued men and women for what they really were, not for title or place.

"One luncheon during the time that my brother was Governor stands out clearly in my mind, owing to an amusing incident connected with it. My dining room at 422 Madison avenue was small, and fourteen people were the actual limit that it could hold. One day, having told me that he was bringing ten people to lunch, realizing his hospitable inclinations, I had had the table set for the limit of fourteen. We were already thirteen in the sitting room, when the door bell rang, and, looking out of the window, he turned to me with a troubled expression and said, "I think I see two people coming up the front steps, and that will make fifteen.' I suddenly decided to be unusually firm, and I said: 'Theodore, I have not places for fifteen; you said there would be only ten. I am delighted to have fourteen, but you will have to tell one of those two people that he will have to go somewhere else for lunch.' He went out into the hall, and in a moment returned with one of his beloved Rough Riders and an air of triumph on his face. I whispered: 'Were there really two, and who was the other, and what has happened to him?' And he whispered back, like a child who has had a successful result in some game: 'Yes, there were two—the other the president of the University of ——. I told them they had to toss up, and the Rough Rider won'—this with a chuckle of delight."

Antiquity's Great Biographer

PLUTARCH'S LIVES. With an English translation by Bernardotte Perrin. Loeb Classical Library. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"I AM a man, and nothing that relates to mankind do I deem foreign to me." So says Terence.

"The proper study of mankind is man." So says Pope.

Thus, each in a single line, have one of the most modern of classic poets and one of the most classic of modern poets epitomized the underlying thought that pervades all Greek and Roman literature, justly called the humanities. Exactly as the gods of the Greek or the Roman were anthropomorphic, so was his world anthropocentric. He knew little of the modern romantic interest in nature, or animals, or children, for their own sake.

If Catullus sings of Lesbia's sparrow he is really celebrating its mistress's fondness for it and her grief at its death. Actual sympathy for the bird itself, such as stirred Bryant for his waterfowl or Shelley for his skylark, is wholly lacking. And if Horace extolled his Sabine Farm, and in later days Martial and Juvenal, too, sought rural retreats, we may be sure that each loved the country not so much for its own sake—like a Wordsworth or a Burns—as for the relief and release that assured him from the inconveniences of city life. The philosophers early recognized and proclaimed as truth this racial trait. "Man is the measure of all things," said Protagoras. And "know thyself," the motto of the Delphic oracle, was adopted as his own not by Socrates alone, but by practically every Greek or Roman that followed him.

In view of this universal interest we note with some surprise the paucity of first class biography among both Greeks and Romans. Plato and Xenophon have given us unforgettable portraits of their master, yet each is really portraying himself and his own ideas and ideals rather than Socrates and his; and neither was a true biographer, for Plato was essentially the philosopher, Xenophon the moralist-historian. Xenophon's narrative of Cyrus's life is perhaps even less of a biography than his picture of Socrates.

Among the Romans we find a larger amount of genuine biography. Naturally more concrete and practical in character than the Greeks, they tended to present their moral and philosophical views by example rather than by precept.

Indeed, in Rome as in Greece, for truly first class biography we must turn to one who was not primarily a biographer at all. Tacitus, the inimitable historian, did write one memoir, that of his father-in-law, Agricola, toward whom he cherished a filial devotion as rare as estimable on the part of a son-in-law; but his world famous pictures of men are in his histories, where he gives us portraits of the Caesars as vivid as Suetonius's, and presented with far more real insight and talent.

So far, we have searched in vain in classic Greece and classic Rome for a genuine biographer of ability. We find one at last—and one alone—in that marvellous fusion of the two civilizations attained in the so called Graeco-Roman period. Captured Greece had captured her captor Rome indeed. Greek lecturers were eagerly welcomed in Rome, where they played a part similar to that of the exchange professors of to-day—minus the exchange. One of these, who lived during the first century of our era, refused to be impressed by the current view that, while the captured nation was undeniably preëminent in arts and letters, all the real doers of all time belonged to the race of the captors. This visiting villager longed to show his metropolitan audiences that if their State had had a hero founder like Romulus, a law giver like Numa, a General like Pompey, a patriot like Brutus, a world conqueror like Julius Ceasar, his own country could balance these mighty men of action with a Theseus, a Lycurgus, an Agesilaus, a Dion, an Alexander. Hence he conceived the idea of Parallel Lives which has eternally glorified and universally endeared the name of Plutarch.

The plan was this: to present a series of Greek and Roman biographies arranged in pairs, each pair followed by a comparison of the two men just treated separately. These comparisons—a rather delicate matter—are most interesting and present Plutarch in an admirable light, altogether free on the one hand from bigoted partiality toward his native land, and on the other from subservient sycophancy toward the country of his patrons. Of course, so artificial and arbitrary an arrangement is not without its drawbacks; very often the men compared show no striking similarities, and often the grouping seems distinctly far fetched, such as that of Alcibiades and Coriolanus (Loeb Library, vol. IV.), where to find a counterpart for the well known Greek character of his country's greatest period, he has to have recourse to a comparatively obscure Roman of legendary times. For this reason the comparisons are little known and discussed to-day, and the very word of the title which indicates their presence—"Parallel"—is often omitted. We generally speak simply of Plutarch's "Lives," and this fact has made possible the amusing anecdote related by Dr. Tyrrell, of a dialogue overheard in Ireland.

"And would they take the boy's life for the like o' that?"

"Bedad they would, if he had as many lives as Plutarch."

The moralizing tendency was strong among the ancients. It is in line with their anthropocentric views already referred to. Of art for art's sake, or of truth for truth's sake, they knew little. Those hideous and heartless half views of life that often do duty for realism to-day were quite foreign to them. If they frankly present ugly things—and heaven knows that they do—it is with the lusty interest of healthy animals, and not with the morbid detachment of the dissecting room. But fortunately they believe in presenting the beautiful and ennobling side of life too, and for a purpose that would be scorned to-day as hopelessly passe—teaching, preaching, the conveying of a lesson or pointing of a moral by precept and example. Our aloof scientific attitude would be incomprehensible to them.

Lucretius presents a marvellous semi-scientific, semi-philosophical, six book dissertation on the universe—equally noteworthy for its right guesses and for its wrong—merely for the sake of reassuring anxious man in regard to a future life—which he does incidentally by denying its existence. History is regarded not as science but as a sort of combination of rhetoric and philosophy. The common view as to its function is expressed by Livy in his justly famous preface, where he declares that the main value of history lies in the presentation of instances whence we may learn what to imitate and what to avoid, for our own sake and for the state's. Like Livy's attitude toward history is Plutarch's toward biography. He voices it in the beginning of the Timolean (Loeb Library, vol. VI., p. 261 f.):

"I began the writing of my 'Lives' for the sake of others, but I find that I am continuing the work and delighting in it now for my own sake also, using history as a mirror and endeavoring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues therein depicted. For the result is like nothing else but daily living and associating together, when I receive and welcome each subject of my history in turn as my guest, so to speak, and observe carefully 'how large he was and of what mien,' and select from his career what is most important and most beautiful to know. . . . In my own case, the study of history and the familiarity with it which my writing produces, enables me, since I always cherish in my soul the records of the noblest and most estimable characters, to repel and put far from me whatever base, malicious or ignoble suggestion my enforced associations may intrude upon me, calmly and dispassionately turning my thoughts away from them to the fairest of my examples."

E. ADELAIDE HAHN.

To Be Concluded Sept. 18.